

Guidelines for Permitting a Caterer in the Town of Amherst

Definition of a Catered Food Event:

A catered food event is one where food is served to a pre determined number of people and where the food is generally served at one point in time to the entire group. Event planning is driven by the number of anticipated guests, and payment is contingent upon the guaranteed number of guests.

Definition of a Caterer:

Caterer means any person who prepared food intended for individual portion service and transports it to another location, or who prepares and serves food at a food service establishment other than one for which s/he holds a permit, for service at a single meal, party or similar gathering.

Caterers can prepare food at their licensed base of operation or another licensed food establishment. Caterers who prepare food at a location other than their base of operation are responsible for providing adequate equipment and sanitary facilities. At an unlicensed facility, food handling should be limited to serving items prepared at the base of operation with a minimum of further food preparation, unless adequate equipment is provided by the caterer.

Anyone purchasing and preparing food for a client in the client's home kitchen using the client's utensils and equipment will not be considered a caterer. Such a person is providing services compared to that of a personal cook or housekeeper. However, if the individual or business is storing or processing food at another establishment, is using their own equipment, or is preparing food at a licensed establishment for service there or at a client's home, they be considered a caterer.

Permit Requirements:

All caterers are required to hold a permit issued by the board of health/Health Department in the town/town in which they have their base of operation. All caterers must have a base of operation designated on their application even if they routinely use other licensed facilities to prepare and serve food. Kitchens holding a residential kitchen permit shall not be used as a base of operation of catering.

The Massachusetts Food Establishment Regulations, 105 CMR 590, have been revised to include caterer in the list of permits issued to the food establishment (590.009 (A) (1). A permit form issued to a food establishment must list the types of operations authorized. Table 1 lists examples of how various caterer operations should be permitted.

Notification Requirements:

Caterers must notify the local Board of Health (BOH) when planning to serve a meal at a site other than their own food service establishment. Written notice must be submitted to the BOH prior to the catered function, on a form provided by the BOH (See Catered Event Notification Form and Food Protection Questionnaire for Catered Events). In emergency situations, a caterer can notify the BOH verbally and provide the written notification within 72 hours. The Food Establishment Regulations do not authorize a

fee for the notification process, nor do they allow a BOH to issue a permit to a caterer based outside its jurisdiction, unless authorized by a local ordinance.

In addition to the notification, caterers should complete the Food Protection Questionnaire for catered events and submit it with the notification letter.

Table 1

Base of Operation	Operations Designated on Permit
Caterer operating from his/her own commercial catering facility	Caterer
Caterer operating from his/her own food establishment business	Food Service/Caterer
Caterer operating from another business (e.g. restaurant)	Caterer (the restaurant must have a separate permit for a food service operation)